

Russia Shows Skill In Wooing Guests

By Marquis Childs

STALINGRAD—It is on the constant stream of visitors from the uncommitted countries of the Middle East, Asia and Africa that the achievement of the Soviet Union in constructing new cities and new industries has its greatest impact.

The Westerner brings with him certain questions and doubts. He is inclined to look at the flaws and to wonder how long this intensive effort can be sustained and what its cost will be for the long pull.



Childs

But the guest from India or Egypt or Ghana sees that a country which 40 years ago had a backward and largely illiterate peasant population, comprising up to 80 per cent of the total, has today industrial production of an advanced order. The tractor plant here, with its 30,000 employees on three shifts, rebuilt immediately after the war, sells tractors to India and China.

The delegations from the uncommitted countries are keenly aware that the problem of a backward peasantry is very much with them. The lesson plainly is that if Russia can overcome it, then they can, too, and in the same way that it has been done here—through communism.

THE COST of bringing this unending stream of visitors to the Soviet Union and giving them the grand tour is obviously great. But that it pays off in winning friends can scarcely be doubted.

Recently the King and Queen of Nepal were given the full treatment during a three-week visit. Nepal is a small country adjacent to Tibet and India, with a people who live an almost primitive agricultural life. But it is of great strategic importance and the honors shown the King and Queen and their extensive entourage could not have been greater if they had been monarchs of a major power.

Their tour illustrates the great pains the Russians take not only with royalty but with all visitors whom

they want to impress. This was not a matter merely of a show in Moscow with a Kremlin reception and then sending them on their way with an escort for a sightseeing trip. On the main streets in each of the half dozen cities they visited, Nepalese flags were displayed with the flags of the USSR, and the highest authorities received them with honors at each stop.

The royal pair spent two and a half days at Stalingrad. They were shown the schools, theaters, the tractor plant and, of course, the great power dam being constructed on the other side of the Volga. While they may have felt at times that their hosts were relentless—when the full treatment is planned, then you get the full treatment—but coming from their capital of Katmandu, which has altered its ways little if at all over the centuries, they must have seen in this reconstructed city a vision of the future.

AFTER THE Nepalese came a delegation from Iceland, and at the same time East Germans and part of an Indian trade delegation were going the rounds. The new Intourist Hotel in Stalingrad is one of the best in the Soviet Union, with everything spick and span.

The major stress in this highly organized effort is on Asia. One sees visitors from India everywhere. They come in delegations representing youth, sports, trade. Their pictures appear in the newspapers and they are whirled from place to place in big black Zis limousines. This fit is hardly necessary to add, is very flattering, particularly when your host is picking up the bills.

As with so much that is happening in Russia, it is not difficult to project the curve of the future on the basis of what has already come to pass. It is a safe guess that this drive to win friends and influence people by the guided-tour method is only in its beginning phase.

Many areas still in the early construction or reconstruction stage are out of bounds for foreign visitors. As additional centers are opened up, the grand tour will be extended to take in more man-made wonders marked with the Communist label.

The well-trained guides pour out an endless flow of statistics, usually in the language of the visitor, no matter how obscure that language may be. They would have an improbable sound if it were not for the fact that before his eyes are tangible accomplishments in stone and steel.